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RACE RELATIONS AND THE NEW AGENDA FOR HIGHER EDUCATION.

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IT IS URGED THAT HIGHER EDUCATION TEST AND DEMONSTRATE THE "SCIENTIFIC VALIDITY, PEDAGOGICAL SOUNDNESS, AND DEMOCRATIC FEASIBILITY" OF RACIAL DESEGREGATION. NEEDED IS A GREATER AND MORE SYSTEMATIC USE OF SCHOLARLY WRITINGS AND CREATIVE LITERATURE BY AND ABOUT THE NEGRO, TEXTS SHOULD INCLUDE MATERIAL ON THE ROLE OF THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN HISTORY AND SOCIETY. MOREOVER, THERE MIGHT BE SPECIFIC COURSES AND SYSTEMATIC RESEARCH BY TEACHERS AND STUDENTS ON THE NEGRO. COLLEGE STUDENTS SHOULD ALSO BE INCULCATED WITH DEMOCRATIC ATTITUDES THROUGH "SYSTEMATIC ATTACKS ON PREJUDICE." OTHER SUGGESTIONS INCLUDE HOLDING PROFESSIONAL MEETINGS IN INTEGRATED LOCATIONS SO THAT NEGRO COLLEAGUES MAY EASILY PARTICIPATE, AND REMOVING FROM THE INTEGRATED NEGRO STUDENT THE BURDEN OF BEING A REPRESENTATIVE OF ALL NEGROES. IT IS ALSO FELT THAT COMPARING THE STATUS OF AMERICAN NEGROES TO THAT OF AFRICANS IS POINTLESS AND ERRONEOUS, THAT THE SHARING OF COMMON PROBLEMS BY WHITES AND NEGROES IS DESIRABLE, AND THAT EXCHANGING LECTURES AND STUDENT VISITORS ACROSS RACIAL LINES IS AN IMPORTANT ASPECT OF COMMUNICATION AND UNDERSTANDING. THIS ARTICLE WAS PUBLISHED IN THE "PHI DELTA KAPPAN," VOLUME 47, NUMBER 8, MAY 1965. (NH)

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A Plea for University Leadership

Race Relations and the New Agenda For Higher Education

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By CHARLES U. SMITH

WHEN most Americans think of American history it is not likely that they give much attention to the American Negro. The American ethos, traditional historical writing, conventional courses of instruction, and provincial mores tend to discourage inquiry into the Negro's impact on and contribution to the American "way of life." Nevertheless, when one attempts to conceive of an American history, or a contemporary America, without the consistent, and perhaps the pernicious, presence of the Negro, his imagination will be hard put indeed. For when one thoughtfully examines the historical development of almost every facet of American life, particularly the major social institutions, he will find that the Negro—for better or worse, accidentally or deliberately, openly or insidiously, profitably or wastefully—has been continually and often painfully present in every "woodpile" of American society.

Every major social institution from government to religion, from economics to education and family life, reflects the presence of the Negro and race relations; and it would appear that no other group, activity, achievement, or problem has had such a profound, enduring, and pervasive effect on the course of American history. Whatever has been the role and status of the Negro at any time in history, all of the social institutions have found ways to undergird and support that role and status in philosophy and practice. Whenever the role and status of the Negro has changed, these social institutions, perhaps reluctantly, have developed philosophical and moral concepts, as well as operational techniques, which support the new function and position. Higher education has been no exception in its support of whatever the judicially sanctioned, legally enforced role and status of the Negro happened to be. Under slavery, prominent educators such as Thomas R. Dew (ultimately president of William and Mary College) defended, rationalized, and gave educational respectability to the System.[1] The "separate but equal" pattern was given prestigious support and validity by such educators as Booker T. Washington and William Graham Sumner.[2]

For at least fourteen years it has been clear that segregation of the Negro as a way of life in America is no longer judicially sanctioned or legally enforceable. Yet higher education has thus far accomplished relatively little by giving philosophical and scholarly underpinning to the Negro's desegregated role and status. The proposal here is that higher education consciously, deliberately, and systematically undertake the testing and/or demonstration of the scientific validity, pedagogical soundness, and democratic feasibility of racial desegregation in American society. The specific suggestions that follow make up what is euphemistically termed the "New Agenda" for higher education.

The first suggestion is that greater and more systematic use be made of scholarly and creative literature by and about Negroes, as well as textbooks that include appropriate coverage of the role of the Negro in the development of American society. While the contributions of the Negro to the scholarly literary world have been less frequent and less numerous than those of whites, there is a sufficient quantity of scholarly writings available by men like Kenneth Clark and E.

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[1] Harold Faulkner, *American Political and Social History.* New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1952, pp. 310, 256 ff.
Richard Leopold and Arthur Link (eds.), *Problems in American History.* New York: Prentice-Hall, 1952, pp. 417 ff.
John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom.* New York: Alfred Knopf, 1961.

[2] William Graham Sumner, *Folkways.* Boston: Ginn and Co., 1906.
Charles U. Smith and A. S. Parks, "Desegregation in Florida—A Progress Report," *Quarterly Review of Higher Education,* XXV, No. 1, Jan., 1957, p. 58.

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Franklin Frazier and literary productions by men like Frank Yerby and Langston Hughes to provide adequate representation in course bibliographies and suggested readings for college students.

In alluding to the integration of materials concerning the Negro into standard American history textbooks, Professor Maurice Vance wrote in 1958 that:

> In the tapestry of American history, the black threads, though less numerous and less prominant than white, extend with them through the same patterns and period of time. . . .
>
> As one surveys the literature of general American history to study the treatment of the Negro by American historians, one of the first and strongest impressions to emerge is that of the lack of attention paid to Negroes. . . .
>
> Visitors in the field of history have not ordinarily encountered much concerning the history of the Negro among the materials recommended to them by their guides. . . . [3]

While it is true that this situation has been rectified somewhat since 1958, especially with respect to recent events, examination of several representative texts in wide use today reveals need for improvement. The greater use of materials by, about, and inclusive of the Negro would breach no ethics while contributing to a more accurate appreciation of the Negro.

As a corollary to the first point, a second activity on the "agenda" might well be the presentation of formal courses dealing with the Negro in America. Many predominantly white universities offer courses in minority relations which most certainly include a treatment of the Negro. Such courses are hardly comprehensive enough, nor can they reach enough students, and they cannot within a semester or trimester do justice to the study of the Negro, who presents many unique and typical problems. Formal courses on the Negro can probably be justified with even more educational soundness today than anthropology courses on the American Indian, the Seminole, and peoples of Mexico; history courses on Latin America, the Far East, Brazil, and Russia; political science courses on Africa, the Far East, and South America; sociology courses on the people of Spanish America and institutions of Brazil and Latin American population; and the English courses on British fiction, introduction to folklore, and Beowulf.

To those who might object that the Negro has no real culture of his own and therefore is not comparable to other ethnic groups, the reply would be that it is true that the Negro has no culture of his own—it having been deliberately destroyed by slave owners bent upon complete control of their property. However, the Negro does have a subculture and an identity. Unfortunately, the subculture and identity of the American Negro are fraught with anxiety, frustration, subordination, inferiority feelings, insults, deprivation, and restrictions—all the more reason for courses to aid in understanding the world of the Negro.

One of the principal functions of a university is research, and herein lies a third suggestion, namely, that both teachers and students carry on more systematic research on the Negro. The object would not be to produce "sociologists of the Negro" but to accumulate facts which are essential in objective appraisal; to gather empirical evidence that can be used in the elimination of racial fictions and rumors; to aid in rational rather than emotional evaluation; and to dispel clichés and stereotypes in matters of race relations. Research could be done on the origin and background of the militant Negro leadership to determine the validity of the claim that they are "outside agitators" and "Communists." Research in the Tallahassee, Florida, area revealed that virtually 100 per cent of the civil rights leaders, both adults and students, were born and raised in the South and received or were receiving their undergrade training in Negro colleges in the South.[4]

Research might demonstrate the fallacy of the discriminatory allegation that the Negro must get "ready" and then earn his civil rights. How did the Hungarian refugees in 1959 "earn" their civil rights in America? They are almost totally assimilated now, despite a language barrier which the Negro does not have. How did the Cuban refugees in South Florida earn their civil rights in America? Already they are in jobs and are receiving opportunities never made available to Negroes—they are even displacing Negroes in the traditional "Negro" jobs. Is it true that the American Negro is the only group in America required to take a bath, pass an intelligence test, or be a "champion" in order to be admitted to a hotel, a public park, or the front of a bus?

In the humanities areas, research could be done on the Negro spiritual. Were these songs of passive acceptance and accommodation? Why do

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[3] Maurice M. Vance, "The Negro in the Literature of American History," in *The Negro in American Society*, Florida State University Studies. Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1958, pp. 71, 81, 83.

[4] Lewis M. Killian and Charles U. Smith, "Negro Protest Leaders in a Southern Community," *Social Forces*, XXXVIII, 1960.

Lewis M. Killian and Charles U. Smith, *The Tallahassee Bus Protest*. Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, Field Studies in Desegregation, 1958.

Charles U. Smith, "The Sit-Ins and the New Negro Student," in Earl Raab (ed.), *American Race Relations Today*. New York: Doubleday, 1962, pp. 69-75.

so many spirituals allude to such things as "wearing golden slippers and walking all over God's heaven" and "trouble don't last always," or admonish Moses to tell Old Pharaoh to "let my people go"? What are the facts? Were the songs a subtle but consistent protest against the restrictions of slavery and a desire for complete freedom?

One of the basic purposes of research is to make scientific investigations to predict future developments and future problems. Years ago studies were made of growth trends of America's population which anticipated the unprecedented college enrollments of today. Because of this demographic research, plans were implemented to accommodate the increased influx of students. Problems accompanying acceptance and implementation of the desegregation of the Negro will be cropping up for the foreseeable future. Why cannot university personnel engage in systematic research in race relations and thereby provide a body of predictive information which would be invaluable in planning preventive and ameliorative programs? Somehow higher education must overcome its traditional timidity in the area of race relations and take effective action to reduce the popular negativism toward such matters in the community.

Another aspect of the "agenda" involves the inculcation of democratic attitudes in students. The accumulation of facts and their objective and critical assessment contribute to this. But oftentimes the college student lacks sufficient ability and experience to make sound judgments. Consequently, it may become necessary for the instructor deliberately to guide the student to the correct conclusion and the desirable attitude. Educational purists might immediately object that this is indoctrination and is intolerable in education. Fortunately or unfortunately, the great bulk of education, even in college, is indoctrination—that is, teaching students what we want them to know and to accept the conclusions desirable and logical within our frame of reference. Even though we are an English-speaking people we teach correct English for fourteen years; we also teach correct math; we teach correct etiquette (the South has long been noted for its tradition of courtesy and hospitality). What is wrong with teaching correct attitudes and behavior toward Negroes? When we want our students to value Americanism (as opposed to communism) we *teach* them to value it. The Solid South has consistently voted against the desires of the Negro for over 200 years. Just last summer, a solid bloc of Southern senators was engaged in a record-breaking filibuster against the wishes of the Negro. Why is "bloc voting" bad only when the Negro is suspected of it? We must teach students those things we want them to value in race relations as we do in other phases of education.

'The Negro in U. S. History'

A 14-page bibliography of books, pamphlets, and articles on "The Negro in United States History" is available in mimeographed form from Lawrence P. Crouchett, Diablo Valley College, Concord, Calif. A teacher of history, Mr. Crouchett compiled the list primarily for use by U.S. history teachers and students who wish to weave an understanding and knowledge of the Negro into the regular history course. It has been organized in chronological manner and by subject areas to enhance its use with the typical U.S. history text and course. The bibliography is used in all Diablo Valley College U.S. history courses.

Requests should be accompanied with 25¢ in coins or stamps to cover cost of mailing.

Six Steps for Higher Education

A number of other things can be done:

1. In higher education we must recognize that the prevention and elimination of *discrimination* can largely be handled by the courts, by legislation, and by law enforcement officers. The prevention and reduction of prejudice, on the other hand, is largely within the purview of formal education. This prevention and reduction of prejudice should not be left to the haphazard forces of the generalized educational process. Rather, if democratic attitudes are to be developed and maintained, conscious, deliberate, and systematic attacks on prejudice must be continuous parts of college and university programs.

2. If the Negro is to be a professional peer and colleague, then we must schedule professional meetings and conferences where he can meet, eat, and sleep, and where he does not have to dissipate so much time, vigor, and emotion in working out the physiology of his participation.

3. Higher education must help the Negro to remove from his anxiety-ridden shoulders the emotional burden of the feeling that he is "representing his people" whenever he attends an integrated class or desegregated activity. A Negro should have the right to fail, or to split infinitives, or to have dirty fingernails without conveying the notion that *all* Negroes are that way. One of the enervating irrationalities of traditional racial thought is that the successful, educated, acceptable Negro is a freak; but the unsuccessful, uneducated, unacceptable Negro is typical of all Negroes.

4. Higher education can demonstrate that it is of little if any satisfaction to the American Negro to point out the favorability of his position in comparison to that of the African or aborgine. The American Negro's psychological commitments and standards of value are typically American, and Africa is just as much a foreign country to him as it is to white Americans.

5. Educators must set more examples of joint participation in the solution of common problems by Negroes and whites.

> In a face-to-face situation . . . many a prejudiced individual is drawn out of his isolation, his loneliness. In sharing the experiences of others, attempting to evaluate problems together, strong bonds of identification with the group are established. Participation in group discussion requires critical examination of long-held attitudes and opinions.[5]

The basic humanity of all mankind is more clearly discernible in direct and personal interaction.

6. More extensive exchange of lecturers and student visitors across racial lines could be an important aspect of contact, communication, and understanding.

IN conclusion, I should like to suggest that higher education has for too long allowed its image to be cast by politicians blocking university entrances and by well-meaning alumni who regard the university as their exclusive country clubs away from home. Higher education must recognize that pious platitudes and tolerant tokenism are totally inadequate in fulfilling its responsibility to the American ideal in the arena of race relations. It must continue to strive for those practices and goals commensurate with educational progress and democratic principles. If ever higher education were needed to assume a greater share of the responsibility in the implementation of true democratic practice in race relations in America—NOW IS THE TIME.

[5] Julius Schreiber, "Doing Something About Prejudice," *Survey Graphic*, Feb., 1948, pp. 56-57.

► "Today's students have not learned that it was a Negro who discovered the process of refining steel, that it was a Negro who invented the half-soling of shoes, that it was a Negro who invented watches, and that it was a Negro who first set foot on the North Pole—he was pushed to the front, since it was dangerous, but he was not 'counted' later on."

—Whitney Young, in an address before the March, 1965, A.H.E. conference in Chicago

Needed: Professional Critics in Classrooms

► "What we need in education is a scheme for bringing into the classroom, particularly the classrooms of the most outstanding teachers, visitors who are well prepared to observe what goes on, to recognize and describe excellence when they see it, and to appraise the techniques a teacher uses in relation to his purposes, his materials, and the pupils with whom he is working. Such a professional critic would not be connected officially with the school system. He might be a writer for a professional journal, or a competent scholar in pedagogy, or a well-trained educational reporter. . . .

"Criticism of the sort I am proposing would focus not so much on detailed analysis as on a superior teacher's ability to synthesize a diversity of elements in uniquely creative ways. It would examine, describe, and attempt to explain the relation of his technique and his style to the intellectual and psychological problems he confronts, how he obtains coherence and direction, the pace and rhythm of his presentations, his choice of material, and the nature of the results he achieves with his students."

—John H. Fischer, president, Teachers College, Columbia University

Comparative Educators Please Note

► "For all the 'new direction' of comparative education, and the apparent importance of this traditional research tool of educators, the *Education Index* does not index any educational journals published in Latin America, Africa, or Asia!

"The *Index* volume for January 1929-June 1932 was examined to determine the countries of origin of the 151 magazines indexed. All the indexed journals were published in the United States with the exception of five printed in Great Britain, three in Switzerland, and one each in Canada, France, Germany, and China. After three revolutionary decades, a similar analysis was made of the volume for July 1961-June 1962. The total number of magazines indexed had increased to 206. All of these journals were printed in the United States except six published in Great Britain, and one each in Canada, France, Switzerland, and Holland. The sole educational journal printed in Asia (China), and indexed in the 1929-32 volume of *Education Index*, had been dropped."

—Donn V. Hart, in the *Comparative Education Review*

The Outdated Graded School

► "The graded school is frozen to a dangerously dated posture. Its monolithic structure is rigged against good learning. The curriculum of the graded school is designed to meet group demands and it does this with Procrustean solutions. As often as not the effect of the graded school is to bring uncommitted learners into contact with an incompatible curriculum. Graded schools are still flunking 25 per cent of the students and blaming the students for their failure."

—B. Frank Brown, principal, Melbourne, Fla.